

# News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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## **BOXCUTTERS FOUND ON PLANES AS ADMINISTRATION CUTS LUGGAGE INSPECTORS**

*Lawmaker Decries Disappearance of 6000 Airport Screening Jobs;  
Calls for Congressional Hearings*

Washington, DC: U.S. Rep Edward Markey (D-MA) today called for congressional hearings into a series of security breaches at our nation's airports, the latest of which include the discovery of box cutters in suspicious bags deliberately planted with notes on two separate passenger airliners.

"In just the last two days, very serious gaps have been exposed in the security safety net put in place to protect passengers flying on commercial airplanes," said Markey, who is a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security and the author of legislation to require inspections of all cargo placed on passenger planes. "Yesterday's report was about government investigators sneaking knives, a gun and a bomb past airport screeners. Today, we learn that box cutters and other potential tools of terror were found on two Southwest Airlines planes."

"Despite these wake-up calls, the Bush Administration plows ahead with its ill-considered plan to slash 6,000 airport screening jobs," Markey continued. "It appears that the Administration is operating on a novel security theory – by reducing the number of screeners at our nation's airport gates, we can reduce the likelihood that errors will be made that directly threaten the flying public. Someone needs to add up 2 plus 2 – when you cut out inspections, the box cutters get in."

"While we don't know yet who placed the items on the Southwest flights, we do know that Al Qaeda continues to target commercial planes," concluded Markey. "Airport screeners are a vital part of the layered security approach that's needed to keep passengers safe, and the White House and Republicans in Congress should abandon their plan to fire the screeners - it's unwise, uncalled for and utterly irresponsible given these recent security breaches."

Rep. Markey sent a letter to the chairman of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, Christopher Cox (R-CA), calling for immediate hearings on airport security and these latest security breaches. The letter, as well as other materials on airline security, can be found at [www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey).

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